



NEWS RELEASE

Office of Representative Steve Smith

ARIZONA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Rep. Steve Smith, R- Maricopa (Dist. 11)

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GETTING TO THE BOTTOM OF CPS DISASTER

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX (Feb. 12, 2014) – Rep. Steve Smith was one of the first legislators in the House of Representatives to hear testimony about why 6,500 cases of reported child abuse went uninvestigated.

Smith's primary concerns during the testimony were to find out who was responsible for re-classifying the cases so that they would not be investigated and what will be done so that this kind of problem never happens again.

The state agency responsible for protecting children failed to investigate more than 6,500 reported cases of child abuse. Some cases dated back to as far as 2009. The majority of the uninvestigated cases were reported in the last two years.

Smith is a member of the House Reform and Human Services committee. On Jan. 30, 2014, the committee heard testimony from Charles Flanagan, the head of the governor's CARE Team that was setup to provide an independent investigation of the missing cases.

In response to Smith's first question, who was responsible, Flanagan replied that DES director Clarence Carter identified five people who are now on leave pending the conclusion of the investigation.

Flanagan added that as the director of the newly created Child Safety and Family Services agency (CSFS) he understood the responsibility placed before him.

"The buck stops with me," Flannigan said. "I am the person responsible in the future."

CSFS replaces the Child Protective Services agency (CPS) that failed to investigate the reported cases. Unlike CPS, this new agency is not under the Department of Economic Security and will report directly to the governor.

Smith also heard testimony from Detective Gregory McKay with the Office of Child Welfare Investigations (OCWI), which uncovered the unreported cases November 2012. Smith

thanked McKay and his team of 30 investigators for their excellent work, and noted McKay is not a “reshuffled bureaucrat” but an actual law enforcement detective who brings a common sense approach to problem-solving.

“Protecting the most vulnerable of our population, our children, is of utmost importance,” Smith said. “I will continue to do what I can to make sure that such a disaster does not happen again.”

The Arizona CARE team last report indicated that all of the uninvestigated cases have been assigned, and that more than 72 percent of them have received a response. In addition, 6,071 children have been verified as seen.

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